

FILM REVIEWS

Whether or not **Pinball Summer** reaches the adolescent, and post-adolescent market it aims down for, is a moot point. I heard one fiftyish matron sigh upon leaving the theatre, "It's frightening if you have young kids." I think she was bemoaning the film's reflection of the adolescent's never-ending wrestling match with runaway hormones and unrequited sexuality.

An alien being exposed to this supermarket of sexual innuendo with no sex might conclude that play, fantasy and consumption with no consummation are what earth creatures do. Or perhaps suburban survival from junk food overdose is the latest adaptation of the Margaret Atwood "survival is Canadian" litany.

Gary Evans

tion of his lack of courage, gives one of those oddly angled, jittery bits that have been an **Houstonian** hallmark since Peter Lorre's entrance in **The Maltese Falcon** almost forty years ago.

The story concerns a group of five phobic patients under the treatment of Dr. Ross (Glaser): an agoraphobe (Stewart), a claustrophobe (Eisner), an acrophobe (Bolt) an ophiophobe (Robert O'Ree), and a girl terrified of men (Lisa Langlois).

One by one they are killed off in ways appropriate to their fears. Enter a scenery-chewing detective (Colicos, of course), determined to get to the bottom of things. Scattered about are Ross's old and current girlfriends (Hogan, and, in a nicely underplayed turn, Patricia Collins). Of course, at the bottom of it all is Doctor Ross (This becomes apparent about half-way through the film).

The narrative inconsistencies could fill several volumes. Ross, for example, is from California, but his accent is pure Brooklyn. The detectives take their suspect for the first murder and brutalize him for no apparent reason. Ross's "radical" technique, of helping his patients overcome their fears by exposing them to what they fear, is almost as old as psychotherapy.

Phobia's real significance, however, comes from the very precise ways in which it demonstrates exactly what is

John Huston's Phobia

d. John Huston **exec.p.** Larry Spiegel, Mel Bergman **p.** Zale Magder **sc.** Lew Lehman, Jimmy Sangster, Peter Bellwood **story** Gary Sherman, Ronald Shusett **asst. to Mr. Spiegel/Mr. Bergman** Judy Goldstein **mus.** André Gagnon **d.o.p.** Reginald H. Morris, C.S.C. **co-ord.** Alice Ferrier **p.man** David Sheperd, Emily Eng (asst.) **loc.man** Barry Bergthorson **sec.** Monique Savarin, Sue Murdoch **loc.audit.** Edythe Hall, Penny Royce (asst.) **assoc. to Mr. Huston** Gladys Hill **a.d.** David Robertson (1st), Richard Flower (2nd), Karen Pike (3rd), Louise Caselman (3rd) **p.design.** Ben Edwards **art.d.** David Jaquest, Joe Cselenyi (asst.) **set dec.** Andree Brodeur, Chris Biden (asst.) **cam.op.** Murray Magder, Neil Seale (1st asst.), Mike Hall (2nd asst.), Kerry Smart (3rd asst.) **gaf.** Chris Holmes **best boy** Tony Eldridge **elec.** Ron Chegwidien, John Spurell **generator op.** John Ferguson **key grip** John Hackett, Jim Krauter (2nd), Wayne Goodchild (3rd) **prop. master** Elena Kenny, Hilton Rosemarin **script superv.** Blanche McDermaid **make-up** Kathy Southern **hair** David Beecroft **ward.** Aleida Macdonald, Ann Russell (asst.) **sd.rec.** Noland Roberts **boom** Herb Heritage & Tim Roberts **driver capt.** Jim Kennedy **head driver** John Cocks **craft service** Brad Blackwood **casting dir.** Vicki Mitchell **casting extras** Peter Lavender **ed.** Stan Cole, Bruce Lang (asst.), Gilles Le Clair (asst.) **sd.ed.** Peter Burgess, Jeremy MacLaverty (2nd) Gary DaPrato (asst.) **mus.superv.** Tim McCauley **re.rec.** Paul Coombe, Mike Hogenboom **spec.efx** Martin Malivoire **stunt co-ord.** Paul Nuckles, Bob Hannah **stunt persons** Greg Gault, Jack Verboise, Joie Chitwood, Moo Herbst, Gloria Fioriomonte, Terry Martin, Joanne Lang-Hannah **stills** Anthony Bliss **psych. consult. to Mr. Huston** Melvyn Hill, Ph.D. **l.p.** Paul Michael Glaser, John Colicos, Susan Hogan, Alexandra Stewart, Robert O'Ree, David Bolt, David Eisner, Lisa Langlois, Kenneth Welsh, Neil Vipond, Patricia Collins, Marian Waldman, Gwen Thomas, Paddy Campanero, Gerry Salsberg, Peter Hicks, Joan Fowler, John Stoneham, Terry Martin, Ken Anderson, Janine Cole, Karen Pike, Wendy Jewel, Coleen Embry, Diane Lasko **p.c.** Borough Park Productions (1979) **col.** 35 mm **running time** 91 min. **distrib.** Paramount Pictures

Despite the rather Hobbesian reviews **Phobia** has received in the Toronto press, it isn't that bad. Despite what Jay Scott would have you believe, it is not the worst film that John Huston has directed (remember, we have here the director of such yawn-inducers as **The Misfits**, **Night of the Iguana** and **Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison**), it is not the worst Canadian film of the year (there's **Prom Night**, for starters), and although it is certainly negligible as art or commerce, it has a few things going for it.

Despite the singularly dull presences of Paul Michael Glaser, Susan Hogan and John Colicos in the leads, there are some good performances from: Alexandra Stewart, who is unfortunately killed off in the first reel; David Bolt, as a timid acrophobic; and most memorably, David Eisner, who in one brief descrip-



Trying to conquer her **Phobia** of open spaces, medical patient Alexandra Stewart in a sudden panic.

wrong with the Canadian cinema. John Huston is without question the best director ever to make a Canadian film. So why did the producers hire one of the last of the old masters, to knock out the kind of story which is regularly knocked out by first-time directors? (The sort of thing that a Carpenter, or a dePalma, does with his eyes closed). Huston's great virtues are as a storyteller (note the sweep of **The Man Who Would Be King**, and the relaxed orneriness of **The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean**), and as a director who can get his characters to inhabit real places — as in the extraordinary cityscapes of **The Asphalt Jungle** and **Fat City**. He has never been wound tight enough to deliver that remorseless little horror thriller that **Phobia** so longs to be. Therefore, we must ask why he was hired. For the class of his name? To control John Colicos?

John Trent, in a recent **Toronto Star** interview, claimed that the Canadian cinema is a producer's, rather than a director's cinema. This would be no problem, if the producers hired the right directors for the job.

Mind, Huston did bring something to **Phobia** — aside from a mere forty-odd years of experience. He gave it a visual sense, which brought out the best in cinematographer Reginald Morris. One need only compare the bland, television look of **Middle Age Crazy**, which Morris lensed for Trent, with the mysterious

darkness that crowds the edge of the frame in **Phobia**. This points the way to a second problem in Canadian movies. With the possible exception of David Cronenberg, is there a single English Canadian director with a distinctive look, or even any visual flair? **Phobia** is the first Canadian film I've seen since **The Brood** that hasn't resembled a bad CBC drama; that looks as if someone actually sat down and thought about how a movie is supposed to look. Contrasting the appearance of recent American films to recent Canadian features, there can be no question as to which side wins. Where are our Carpenters, our dePalmas, our Scorseses — directors whose films are both commercially successful and artistically exciting to look at? Even films like **Days of Heaven** and **The Black Stallion**, which exist in complete intellectual vacuum, are stunning to look at. Until our producers begin to concern themselves with films as more than tax shelters for dentists, and "packages" of talent with "proven" ingredients (out-of-work TV stars, aging hams, hack directors, and plots made out of elements that weren't very good to begin with), we are doomed to second-rate, cinematic, junk food that nourishes neither the mind nor the adrenaline glands.

Phobia itself is destined to become a footnote to a great director's career, nothing more.

John G. Harkness

Parker p.c. Film Consortium of Canada (1979) col. 35mm Panavision running time 105 min.

One of the most fascinating aspects of watching mid-level multinational productions (in this case, one American star, one Canadian star, one British character actress, British director and d.o.p.) is observing the interplay of well-known actors with people you have never seen before. In fact, the "unknown quantities" in these Canadian productions often provide some of the major pleasures in what are frequently awful films — Frances Hyland, for example, in **The Changeling**, blowing the comatose Trish Van Devere of the screen without even working up a sweat.

It is axiomatic that the performances of "stars" are often the same. For stars are not always stars because of talent, but rather chemistry. The ability to sustain a career is a bonus. James Coburn, the eponymous hero of John Guillermin's **Mr. Patman**, has never been the sort of star whose name guarantees the success of his project. Many of his most interesting projects — **Dead Heat on a Merry-go-round**, Peckinpah's **Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid**, Herbert Ross's **The Last of Shiala**, have been his least successful. But he has a fascinating persona and sufficient star quality to often make him the best thing in bad pictures, offering sufficient justification for sitting through appalling messes like **Blood Kin**.

Coburn is certainly the best thing in **Mr. Patman**, but nevertheless, he faces competition from Fionnula Flanagan, who plays his landlady like some demotedly erotic avatar out of Sean O'Casey's more lurid wetdreams. The scenes between the two of them have an erotic charge seldom seen in Canadian films not featuring Carole Laure or Céline Lomez. They are certainly far more interesting than the scenes of Coburn with Kate Nelligan, his official girlfriend with whom he plans to depart at the film's conclusion.

Patman is a male nurse in a psychiatric ward of some major metropolitan hospital. He is not only a ringmaster who can work miracles with his patients, but also as they say, a devil with the lady's. This is the good part, and Coburn's performance is a whirligig of movement and expression. The plot's drama stems from the fact that our hero is "haunted by a terrible secret from his past" (gasp) and is prone to strange delusions which

John Guillermin's Mr. Patman

d. John Guillermin p. William Marshall, Alexander MacDonald exec. p. Herk Van der Kolk sc. Thomas Hedley d.o.p. John Coquillon, bsc. art d. Trevor Williams ed. Vince Hatherly, Max Benedict mus. Paul Hoffert p. man. Marilyn Stonehouse loc. man. Gordon Mark a.d. Tony Lucibello (1st), Fred Frame (2nd), Mia Laschuk (3rd), Doug White (3rd) p.a. Chris Whitside, Steve Marshall asst. to p. Helga Stephenson cont. Natalie Drache casting direc. Karen Hazzard (T.O.), Lindsay Walker (Vancouver) psychiatric consult. Dr. James E. Miles p. sec. Cathy Howard sec. Jan Block p. account. Heather McIntosh, Sandra Palmer (asst.), Leslie Mark (clerk), Sue Anderson (post-prod.) bookkeeper Linda Goldstein cam. op. Tom Laughridge, Dick Meinardus (1st asst.), Brent Spencer (2nd asst.) stills Phil Hersee loc. sd. mix Brian Simmons boom Roland Fowles sd. asst. Richard Patton asst. ed. Maureen Levitt (1st), Mike Smith (2nd) sd. ed. Peter Phillaye, Wayne Griffin asst. sd. ed. Bruce Giesbrecht, Gordon Thompson

post sync. efx Terry Burke, Glen Gauthier engineered by Jack Heeren re-rec. Gary Bourgeois, Tony Van Den Akker dialog. re-rec. Richard Portman gaf. John Bartley best boy (elec.) Len Wolfe key grip Tim Hogan best boy (grip) John Scott art d. Richard Wilcox construc. superv. Ken Chang art dept. asst. Tom Braidwood set dec. Steve Shewchuk, Randi Johnson (asst.) prop. mas. Jimmy Chow special efx Michael Sullivan, Lee Routley, George Erschbamer animal trainer Gary Vaughan word. design. William Theiss head of ward. Christopher Ryan ward. dress. Jean Causey make-up Edward Ternes (for Kate Nelligan, James Coburn); Ken Brooke, Phyllis Newman hair Jim Keeler catering Location Cateress craft services Joanne Ryan transp. co-ord. Scott Irvine driver capt. Bob Bowe, Brian Boyer (co-capt.) mus. asst. to Mr. Hoffert Laurence Shragge glass instruments Eric Harry l.p. James Coburn, Kate Nelligan, Fionnula Flanagan, Les Carlsen, Candy Kane, Michael Kirby, Hugh Webster, Lin Griffith, Lois Maxwell, Alan McRae, Jan Rubes, Charles Joliffe, Ken Wickes, Tabitha Herrington, Laura Press, Cathryn Balk, Hagan Beggs, Paul Rothery, David Diamond, Blu Mankuma, Shirley Barclay, David Drowley, Daryl Hayes, John Vye, Gary Chalk, Lloyd Berry, Bobby Hanna, Rick